

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable consideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 5-11 and 15-20 are presently pending in this application, Claims 1, 5, 11 and 15 having been amended and Claims 2-4 and 12-14 having been canceled by the present amendment.

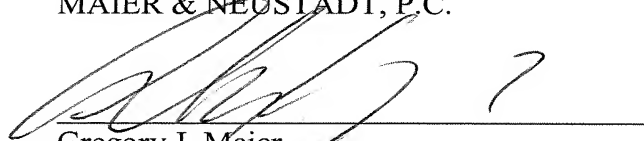
In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1-3, 5-8, 11-13 and 15-18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Takahashi et al. (U.S. Patent 5,735,793). However, Claims 4, 9, 10, 14, 19 and 20 were indicated as including allowable subject matter.

Applicant acknowledges with appreciation the indication that Claims 4, 9, 10, 14, 19 and 20 include allowable subject matter. Accordingly, Claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the subject matter recited in Claims 2-4, Claim 11 has been amended to incorporate the subject matter recited in Claims 12-14, and Claims 5 and 15 have been amended accordingly. Consequently, Applicant respectfully requests that Claims 2-4 and 12-14 be canceled without prejudice.

In light of the prior indication of allowable subject matter and in view of the amendments presented above, no further issues are believed to be outstanding, and the present application is believed to be in condition for allowance. If, however, the Examiner disagrees, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned who will be happy to work in a joint effort to resolve any outstanding issues and expedite the prosecution of this application. Applicant respectfully requests an early and favorable action to that effect.

Respectfully submitted,

OBLON, SPIVAK, McCLELLAND,
MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Maier', is written over a horizontal line.

Gregory J. Maier
Attorney of Record
Registration No. 25,599

Customer Number
22850

Tel: (703) 413-3000
Fax: (703) 413 -2220
(OSMMN 06/04)

Akihiro Yamazaki
Registration No. 46,155

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